

CITY OF BELLEVUE
DOWNTOWN LIVABILITY
CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

March 19, 2014
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E-113

MEMBERS PRESENT: Aaron Laing, Ernie Simas, co-chairs; Patrick Bannon, Hal Ferris, Gary Guenther, Trudi Jackson, Loretta Lopez, Lee Maxwell, Erin Powell, Jan Stout

MEMBERS ABSENT: Michael Chaplin, Mark D'Amato, Brad Helland, Ming Zhang

OTHERS PRESENT: Dan Stroh, Emil King, Patti Wilma, Department of Planning & Community Development

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER, APPROVAL OF AGENDA, APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 p.m. by Co-chair Simas.

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Co-chair Laing. The motion was seconded by Ms. Jackson and it carried unanimously.

With regard to the minutes, Mr. Bannon called attention to the sixth paragraph on page 5 and noted that "Milwaukie" should be spelled "Milwaukee."

A motion to approve the minutes as amended was made by Mr. Bannon. The motion was seconded by Ms. Stout and it carried unanimously.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Christina Wish, 37 103rd Avenue NE, spoke representing the Old Bellevue Merchants Association parking committee. She said there is not a lot of parking in Old Bellevue and the lack of it is hurting business. There are a lot of development projects under way adding construction vehicles to the mix and impacting the area even more. Many people do not even know about Old Bellevue and having signage in several places might help. Adding temporary parking specifically for Old Bellevue until a more long-term solution can be developed would help. A valet parking system could be set up, but no one knows just where the cars would be parked. Even having bike rentals might help.

Co-chair Simas stated that the Transportation Commission will be receiving a presentation on bike rentals in July.

Mr. Mason Cave, 688 110th Avenue NE, spoke representing IntraVest Development, which is currently evaluating the financial feasibility of a project in the Wilburton area. As part of the process, pedestrian connectivity and access to light rail have been evaluated. One of the concepts that has been evaluated is a bridge over I-405. He shared with the Committee some drawings of a conceptual design for a lid over the freeway connecting City Hall to the Wilburton area and developed as a park. The main pedestrian entrance and exit would be from the reflection pond area of the City Hall campus, and people riding light rail would take stairs or use the escalator to get to the park. There is the potential for some parking and civic amenity space next to City Hall. The zoning changes in Downtown and Wilburton that would be needed would come with the ability to pay for certain amenity space and the I-405 bridge.

Co-chair Laing said he and Mr. Ferris met with Mr. Cave on March 18 and were given a presentation of the concept. He said the concept certainly relates to the idea of an amenity system.

Ms. Stout pointed out that accessibility to such a facility would need to accommodate those in wheelchairs as well.

Mr. Ferris stated that bridges can make for a memorable skyline. He shared with the Committee photos from the Urban Land Institute magazine showing memorable bridges.

Mr. Brian Brand with Baylis Architects, 10801 Main Street, called attention to the Pedestrian Corridor on NE 6th Street. He reminded the Committee that the guidelines for the corridor were adopted by the City in 1981. In 2000 a consultant was hired to illustrate and to do some planning work on the corridor; the final product from that effort resulted in the creation of the three districts along the corridor: Street as Plaza, Garden Hillclimb, and Transit Central. He noted from the packet materials that the Committee would be discussing a fourth district focused on the light rail station. Even though more than 30 years have passed, much of the Pedestrian Corridor remains uncompleted, and what has been completed does not really promote pedestrian activity. Weather protection is lacking; retail along the corridor is lacking; and opportunities for people on bicycles is lacking. The guidelines call for a coordinated effort to manage the whole area with events planning, maintenance of landscaping, signage, and other elements and it is disappointing that the vision has not been realized. A highly pedestrian-oriented corridor is a major and key element for many successful cities, and in nearly every case a public/private partnership was created to bring about creation of the corridor, all with a focus on creating more development. The Committee was encouraged to recommend to the City Council the creation of a public/private partnership with a financing option to move ahead. The 2000 version of the guidelines include having (vendor) kiosks on the Honeywell (north) side of the transit center, but that has not been done. Many cities use kiosks and something like that could be done very inexpensively.

Mr. Ferris asked if the kiosks would be informational or actually feature a vendor. Mr. Brand said he was talking about a kiosk at which a vendor would actually be selling something.

Co-chair Laing asked if the Bellevue Downtown Association would want to take on such a project. Mr. Brand said the issue could be presented to the board of directors. Certainly several members of the organization are interested in the idea.

Co-chair Laing asked if the Pedestrian Corridor has not been fully developed simply because the ideas that have been fleshed out have been forgotten, or because there is something missing in the document. Mr. Brand said both are true. The 2000 document is far more detailed than the 1981 document. Some of the sketches drawn for the 2000 document actually look like what has been developed in fits and starts. Compass Plaza was constructed but it has never really been enlivened other than in the summer when the Bellevue Downtown Association sponsors the “Live At Lunch” concert series. The Hillclimb area has no retail at all and essentially there is no reason for pedestrians to visit that segment unless they are simply walking from Bellevue Square to the Transit Center. The lack of weather protection is a negative factor, and at the Bellevue Square end of the corridor pretty much the only activity is access to garages.

Co-chair Laing asked if the problem is that the planning documents are not prescriptive enough. Mr. Brand said the real problem lies in the fact that development of the corridor requires action on the part of adjacent properties. The development currently planned for the other side of the Hillclimb segment represents a huge opportunity. No one knows when or if the site adjacent to Paccar will develop. The City should figure out a way to approach all of the remaining landowners with a consolidated plan for getting the corridor funded and implemented. In cities where there are successful pedestrian corridors, there is a managing organization that takes care of planning; the 16th Street Mall in Denver is a case in point.

Mr. David Schooler, 600 106th Avenue NE, commented that 30 years ago there was not much there, and currently what’s there is not good enough. Retail is needed, but retail takes bodies. The bodies are coming with the increased number of Downtown residential units and with continued office development; the number of people on Downtown sidewalks has increased dramatically in the last 30 years. There are food trucks operating in the Downtown, and the farmers market came online in 2013 and will be bigger in 2014, but unless there is a gigantic public investment the Pedestrian Corridor will not fully develop anytime soon and patience will be required.

3. RECAP OF STAFF UPDATE TO BELLEVUE CITY COUNCIL ON DOWNTOWN LIVABILITY INITIATIVE

Strategic Planning Manager Emil King said the update provided to the City Council on March 3 regarding the Downtown Livability Initiative involved no action on the part of the Council. The update focused on the direction given by the Committee to staff at the alternatives workshop. He directed the attention of the Committee members to the memo included in the packet, and said the video of the meeting could be viewed on the City’s website.

Co-chair Simas said the time had come to turn all of the words used over the past several months into actions. He said the modules to be presented to the Committee were in rough form but polished enough to serve as a final product. Each of the upcoming meetings will be focused on reaching conclusions and making final recommendations on the various modules, all with an eye on the last meeting of the Committee being in June.

Mr. Ferris highlighted the need for the packet materials sent out ahead of each meeting should be very clear about what decisions the Committee will be asked to make.

Mr. Bannon said as new material has been produced he had been challenged in clearly distinguishing the new and different information and weighing the relative changes. In some instances the changes have been minor restatements of existing plans or guidelines. He suggested that as the Pedestrian Corridor and public open space modules are presented there should be a clear indication of what has changed.

Ms. Stout suggested the City needs to address the issue of helicopters given the tragic event that occurred in Seattle on March 18. Safety issues facing the Downtown need to be addressed along with design issues. Co-chair Simas said he would confer with staff on that issue.

4. REVIEW OF MAJOR PEDESTRIAN CORRIDOR INITIAL EVALUATION OF STRATEGIES - BASED ON DIRECTION FROM JANUARY 15 ALTERNATIVES WORKSHOP

Mr. King briefly outlined the Committee's previous direction on code-related Pedestrian Corridor strategies to analyze, including extending the Pedestrian Corridor to the east; methods to require weather protection; methods to better activate the Pedestrian Corridor; opportunities to add landscaping and green elements; and integration of bicycles and other wheeled users. He noted the Committee had also highlighted several non-code measures, including public investment in key sections; wayfinding, overall weather protection, lighting, upgraded pedestrian crosswalks and other features to make the Pedestrian Corridor more inviting; partnership between the City, Pedestrian Corridor property owners and others to support a rich array of events and activities; exploring creative funding to help design and implement a City-sponsored grand design for the Pedestrian Corridor; and exploring changing the name or re-branding the Pedestrian Corridor. He stated that the non-code measures can be forwarded by the Committee to the Council as part of the final recommendation but they do not warrant the same level of analysis as the code measures at this time.

Ms. Maxwell agreed with the comments made by Mr. Schooler relative to the need for a management system. She suggested that many of the strategies from the January 15 workshop could be addressed by having management and funding. She proposed adding management and funding to the list of strategies.

Mr. Guenther said he walks the corridor quite often and would elevate the notion of widening the bottleneck near 108th Avenue NE. The section is so narrow that on rainy days two persons with umbrellas cannot pass each other.

Ms. Maxwell said she would like to see the portion of NE 6th Street that is open to vehicles changed over to allow pedestrians only.

From a process perspective, Co-chair Laing suggested the Committee should decide whether or not the five non-code strategies should be forwarded to the Council as part of the final recommendation before addressing the code-related strategies.

Ms. Stout said she found none of the bulleted items to be objectionable. Each is complementary to the work the Committee has been doing.

Co-chair Simas agreed. He noted that during the Transportation Commission's discussion of the Pedestrian Corridor, the roadblock encountered most often is the fact that the City has no hammer to do anything with and until there is redevelopment nothing can be done. With the way things stand, it will take the property owners getting together or the City making the Pedestrian Corridor a priority and choosing to put public money into it. He said the recommendation of the Committee should be for the Council to start a dialog with the landowners and developers with a goal of seeing the Pedestrian Corridor developed over a set period of time.

Ms. Powell said the five bulleted items should be part of the Committee's final recommendations. She said the issue, as always, is money to pay for the implementation. Agreeing that the strategies are the right ones is one thing, but the Committee should talk about how to accomplish the funding piece for both the Pedestrian Corridor and open space. The question is whether or not only the local property owners should pay or if all the citizens of Bellevue should have a hand in improving the Downtown, which is the economic engine for the whole City.

Co-chair Laing said it appeared to him the Committee was in agreement with the bulleted points. He suggested, however, that inherent in establishing a timeframe is the need to have some accountability. One of the things that ties into the Pedestrian Corridor, especially if it is extended, is the light rail project and the Downtown station. If a timeframe is set, it should coincide with the opening of the light rail station.

Mr. Bannon noted that extending the Pedestrian Corridor to incorporate the light rail station is one of the strategies from the January 15 workshop and an important point. He said the easy step is in deciding the Pedestrian Corridor should be completed, the harder step involves defining who should do and pay for what. He said the dialogue should occur, but the Committee does not need to address it now.

Mr. King said the proposed approach for the strategy of extending the Pedestrian Corridor to the east is to add a fourth segment to the corridor named Civic Center District. In this segment, the Pedestrian Corridor would take two paths. First, the segment

would extend along NE 6th Street from 110th Avenue NE where the entrance to the future light rail station will be to 112th Avenue NE. NE 6th Street and the sidewalks fronting that roadway would be part of the Pedestrian Corridor, so in that vein the area fronting the Braven and Meydenbauer Center on the north side of the street along with the area fronting the City Hall and Metro sites would be considered part of the Pedestrian Corridor. The second path of the Pedestrian Corridor would route along roughly a NE 5th alignment through the City Hall plaza, through the Metro site, and on to 112th Avenue NE and a potential connection across to Wilburton.

Ms. Jackson suggested extending the Pedestrian Corridor to the east depends greatly on having a bridge for pedestrians to use to cross the freeway. Mr. King said the concept of a 14-foot wide pedestrian/bicycle facility connecting from the south side of NE 6th Street from Downtown to Wilburton has seen some design work already. A facility of that sort would be far less complex and expensive than doing an open space lid over the freeway. Ms. Jackson suggested that if the facility is only a vision for some future time, the City should not spend much time, effort and money extending the Pedestrian Corridor as far east as 112th Avenue NE.

Planning Director Dan Stroh said it is feasible to assume that such a facility will be constructed in the next 20 to 30 years. The notion of constructing an open space lid over I-405 is quite an exciting vision and is certainly something that would be a signature piece. It would take creative funding efforts to get there given the cost, but it would certainly help to revitalize the Wilburton district and would provide a link from that area to Downtown, the Pedestrian Corridor, Downtown Park and ultimately to Meydenbauer Bay. The potential is tremendous. While not a pipe dream, the vision certainly is audacious.

Co-chair Simas said the Transportation Commission has considered several options for pedestrian/bicycle crossings of I-405. Even if the grand vision does not come about, it would make sense to extend the Pedestrian Corridor to 112th Avenue NE.

Co-chair Laing pointed out that almost all of the properties abutting both sides of NE 6th Street in the proposed Civic Center District segment are in public ownership, and at least one side is set to undergo some major redevelopment. Extending the Pedestrian Corridor eastward makes a lot of sense if for no other reason than it will create a walking corridor through the heart of Downtown connecting the eastern edge to the western edge.

Mr. Ferris asked if the Pedestrian Corridor should in fact be extended beyond 112th Avenue NE all the way to either the frontage road or the freeway itself ahead of any redevelopment of the area. If the Pedestrian Corridor had been extended prior to the development of the Bravern, there likely would be a very different frontage in place in that section.

Mr. Bannon said extending the corridor all the way to the freeway seems okay at first blush but asked if that would imply some sort of an easement. Mr. Ferris said much would depend on how the pedestrian bridge will connect. If it were elevated all the way

to 112th Avenue NE, it would not be necessary to extend the corridor all the way to the edge of the freeway. If the vision really is to go across I-405 someday, it will be necessary to make sure the Pedestrian Corridor will continue at some point to where the connection will be made. From a planning perspective, what is needed is language that calls out a district designation.

Co-chair Simas said unless the connection across I-405 is made a City goal, it would never be achieved. He said the recommendation of the Committee should be to extend the Pedestrian Corridor to the east. Mr. Ferris agreed and suggested the language of the first strategy should be to extend the Pedestrian Corridor to the east side of I-405, leaving the particulars to be decided at a future time. There was general consensus in favor of taking that approach.

With regard to the strategy related to methods to require weather protection along the corridor, Mr. King said the proposed approach involves having a framework in which developers can pick from a list of ways to provide weather protection, including building front protection, self-supporting protection, and methods proposed by developers. There may be opportunities for larger structures in certain areas to cover significant portions of the corridor. He also suggested the idea that weather protection at street intersections has been noted by the public and the Committee.

Mr. Bannon asked how 75 percent of building frontage was chosen as the minimum for self-supporting weather protection as noted in the second bullet on page 8 of the memo. Mr. King said the research done by the staff and consultant team arrived at that percentage. Their thinking was that it would be unreasonable to require 100 percent. Community Development Manager Patti Wilma said the code currently has a ratio of height to horizontal projection that roughly translates to weather protection being 12 feet off the ground. The language regarding the width of weather protection gives a range that can accommodate individual building design and signage location.

Mr. Ferris asked if the reference to accommodating two small groups passing is specific enough. Mr. King said that generally translates into between 10 and 12 feet. He noted that the memo is general in nature and does not include every detail at this point. He allowed that if so directed, future packets could include all of the details.

Ms. Stout cautioned against getting too specific. She said what is needed are general guidelines that will not tie the hands of future developers or project reviewers. Co-chair Laing concurred.

With regard to the third bullet item, methods to better activate the corridor, including identification of existing code barriers inhibiting activation, Mr. King said the issue was closely tied to the Land Use Code audit. He allowed that some portions of the Pedestrian Corridor are developed in an attractive way while other areas range between being pleasant and unattractive based on the audit. The idea is to build upon the current development and activities along the corridor to have a more interesting travel sequence. He said the proposal is to have a major point of interest at least every 60 to 90 feet along

the corridor, such as large landscape features, areas designated for programmed events, gateway structures and artwork, changes in building façades, changes in the width of the corridor, building entries, views, intersections with a through-block connection, or other similar changes in the visual qualities of the sequential experience. Minor points of interest should happen more frequently on the order of every 12 to 18 feet and could include items such as permanent artwork, wayfinding kiosks, areas for temporary uses such as flower stands and newsstands, special walkway treatments, benches, picnic tables, and outdoor eating areas, and special architectural elements. Mr. King noted that the specific items were meant to be examples and that flexibility would be used during implementation.

Co-chair Laing said as envisioned the code language would specifically call for a major point of interest every 60 to 90 feet and a minor point of interest every 12 to 18 feet. He asked if there is anything in the code currently that either requires points of interest or prohibits them in any way. Mr. King said nothing was found in the code that would necessarily prohibit them, but at the same time there is no language specific to a travel sequence.

Mr. Ferris agreed with the comments made by Mr. Schooler that what is needed to activate the corridor is people and a sense of place. The Pedestrian Corridor runs east and west like a pedestrian arterial and people need to have a reason to walk the north and south connections from their homes and offices in the Downtown to get to it. Consideration will need to be given to making sure the north and south connections are pedestrian-friendly to encourage walking to the Pedestrian Corridor. Street crossings need to be easy and inviting. The predominant use along the corridor is office and thus even the places that are inviting are not heavily used. If there were restaurants at key street corners, there would be far more people using the Pedestrian Corridor. That combined with the coming increase in Downtown residents is what ultimately will activate the corridor. The points of interest highlighted in the memo are primarily passive, but active uses are also needed.

Ms. Maxwell agreed with the need for active uses. It would be good to have permanent architectural displays of Bellevue's heritage, interesting artistic installations, periscopes and telescopes, and book exchange kiosks. Wayfinding could be incorporated into the corridor that would not necessarily be part of a kiosk.

Co-chair Simas stressed the importance of keeping the options open to things that are of interest without being too specific.

Co-chair Laing suggested that because everything is connected it will be important for the Planning Commission to be thinking about uses when considering amenities.

Ms. Wilma clarified that the uses along the Pedestrian Corridor are by code required to be 100 percent retail on the ground floor, which means shops and restaurants. She said the intention was not to back away from this. She agreed that while some of the uses along the corridor now are not open outside of regular business hours and on weekends, the

critical element is the number of people. Businesses certainly will respond once a critical mass is reached, but the City cannot require certain open hours.

With regard to opportunities to add landscaping and green elements, Mr. King said the proposed approach is to include a landscape concept in the update of the design guidelines. The concept would include some general objectives and principles for the corridor as a whole and for each block addressed separately. More work would need to be done to flesh out the details, including how to further the City's environmental sustainability objectives.

Co-chair Laing said the thing that could become the unifying theme for the corridor is continuity of landscape design. Ms. Jackson concurred. Mr. King agreed the language could be reworked to stress corridor continuity while also addressing opportunities unique to each segment.

Ms. Maxwell stressed the need to view the Pedestrian Corridor as a park. In that respect the landscaping should make the corridor look and feel like a park.

Mr. King said the last topic is the integration of bicycles and other wheeled users on the corridor. Regarding ADA considerations, it will be necessary to have future portions add to the overall accessibility through increased seating and resting areas, enhanced wayfinding, and meeting the barrier free standards in place at time of development. There currently is an ADA route that runs the full length of the corridor; however, one must know where it is and must be okay with being out in the elements for a large portion of the corridor. ADA and barrier free standards evolve over time, including appropriate slope, the frequency of rest areas, and the room needed to navigate a walker or a wheelchair. All new development will need to conform to the current standards.

Ms. Stout called out the need to be clear about meeting current ADA standards in talking about integrating bicycles and wheeled users. Otherwise the focus will appear to be on bicycles primarily.

With regard to accommodating bicycles, Mr. King said the proposed approach is to allow for safe, low-speed bicycle accommodation without interfering with pedestrian movement, safety or comfort. The current guidelines only talk about putting bicycle racks where the north-south streets intersect the corridor. The City's existing pedestrian/bicycle plan calls for an off-street path from Bellevue Way to 112th Avenue NE. More recently, the Transportation Commission was clear in drafting the Downtown Transportation Plan about the need for the Downtown Livability Committee to look at the need to better accommodate bicycles. The recommended approach is that bicycles in the Bellevue Way to 106th Avenue NE segment should use the low-speed, low-volume portion of NE 6th Street that ultimately will be two lanes. For the segment from 106th Avenue NE to 108th Avenue NE the recommendation is to explore a low-speed route towards the middle of the corridor, though in order to safely navigate the grade there should be some separation between the bicycles and the pedestrians. For the segment between 108th Avenue NE and 110th Avenue NE the recommendation is to have bicycles use the sidewalk to the north

of the transit center adjacent to the rider services building; if and when the property to the north redevelops it might be possible to enhance the treatment. Finally, for the segment between 110th Avenue NE and 112th Avenue NE there is an opportunity to use the wide sidewalk on the south side of NE 6th Street that is being planned as part of the transit station.

It was also mentioned that having bicycles in the 106th Avenue NE and 108th Avenue NE segment does not fit the vision of having retail and restaurant uses facing each other that are easily accessible to pedestrians. The primary focus of that segment should be on pedestrians.

Mr. Ferris said Bellevue is more set up to accommodate a bike sharing program than Seattle given that Bellevue has fewer big hills. As the Downtown area continues to develop with residential and as light rail comes through, people will be more willing to be part of an organization that allows for the use of bicycles in and around the Downtown. Figuring out a way to accommodate bicycles will be very important going forward. He agreed that mixing bicycles and pedestrians will be difficult in some areas, but careful thought needs to be given to how to welcome bicycles to the Downtown.

Mr. Bannon said he can envision shared use facilities, but only if bicycles are kept to very low speeds. He said he did not know what mechanisms will need to be contemplated to assure safety in the Pedestrian Corridor. It would be shortsighted to simply disallow shared use facilities.

Ms. Powell pointed out that Bellevue has no laws prohibiting the use of bicycles on sidewalks. They are allowed to legally operate both on sidewalks and in the roadways. There is, of course, the debate about whether or not bicycles should be separate from or blend in with automobiles.

Ms. Lopez asked if the Pedestrian Corridor is considered to be a sidewalk. Mr. King said bicycles are currently allowed to use it. The recommendation, however, is to maintain pedestrian priority throughout the corridor, and to avoid locating a bicycle route where the likelihood exists of having major pedestrian traffic.

Co-chair Simas said the question is not whether or not bicycles should or should not be allowed, the question is how to create an environment that bicycles, pedestrians and people with special needs can all use. The issue may be difficult but it is not insurmountable. The Pedestrian Corridor is a major east-west connection for a variety of users.

Ms. Jackson agreed and pointed out that bicyclists do not want to just ride around the Downtown, they want to go to destinations within the Downtown. It makes sense to have a route through the middle of the Downtown connecting to Wilburton.

Co-chair Laing commented that the issue is one of implementation. The corridor is not finished and as it currently exists it is not a good idea to have bicycle traffic zipping back

and forth through it. However, as new projects go forward there will be opportunities to address the various segments and the variety of issues.

There was general agreement with the proposed approaches for the Pedestrian Corridor as presented by staff.

****BREAK****

5. REVIEW OF PUBLIC OPEN SPACE INITIAL EVALUATION OF STRATEGIES

Ms. Wilma said the three strategies evaluated were: 1) Open Space Expression – identifying and incentivizing different open space expressions for each neighborhood to help address each neighborhood’s needs and enhance their character; 2) I-405 Open Space/Connection – exploring the potential for significant open space/park investment with a lid over I-405 from Downtown to Wilburton along roughly a NE 5th alignment; and 3) Through-Block Connections – strengthening the requirements and guidelines for integrating mid-block connections through the superblocks. She noted that two other pieces will be addressed in another capacity: 1) Updating the design guidelines for through-block connections and publicly accessible open spaces, including provisions for solar access, seating, design principles relating to safety, and active edges along the perimeter of open spaces; and 2) Exploring methods to help fund Downtown open space acquisition and improvement.

With regard to the first strategy, Ms. Wilma outlined a proposed approach under which the various elements, such as neighborhood parks, large plazas and community gardens, would be prioritized by neighborhood.

Mr. Ferris said he liked the idea but asked if the Parks Department or the Parks & Community Services Board has reviewed the approach or the desired new open spaces by district chart that was included in the packet. Ms. Wilma said the chart was drawn up by staff based on where the open space plan in the 2004 Comprehensive Plan identifies priorities.

Ms. Powell noted that a process is in place through which Ashwood Park will be revisited and redesigned. She asked if the old master plan for that park facility was taken into consideration in producing the chart. Ms. Wilma said it was not.

Ms. Lopez asked if the Ashwood column on the chart refers to the park itself or the district. Ms. Wilma said the column headings all refer to districts.

Co-chair Laing asked if the proposal speaks to the Meydenbauer Bay Park master plan and the possibility of establishing a fee in-lieu for funding that project. Ms. Wilma said that issue could be addressed as part of the amenity incentive system. Ms. Wilma continued that the Lake-to-Lake Trail will pass through Old Bellevue and that is why the

chart shows a need for a major bicycle facility in that district. The trail will pass through a number of different districts, each of which will have to respond differently.

Co-chair Laing suggested the recommendation that goes forward from the Committee should alert the Planning Commission to the fact that some of the use/function/feature elements may already be in the amenity system. With regard to the internal corridors/alleys with addresses, he voiced concern over the fact that there does not seem to be any meaningful design standards for them. There needs to be a vision of what they should look like.

Mr. Bannon said in order to achieve some of the items on the list there is going to need to be an incentive offered to the developers.

Ms. Jackson suggested that the first strategy is not going to be realized without stepping outside the Land Use Code and making some tactical decisions. The critical importance of open space needs to be made very clear to the Planning Commission and to the City Council. Co-chair Laing agreed and said all the planning in the world means nothing absent having money behind it. The need for a major public investment cannot be overlooked.

Mr. Ferris referred to the City Center North district and the open space shown as appropriate for the plaza around the future Tateuchi Center. He pointed out that location relative to the sun has a huge influence on whether or not green spaces are successful, thus areas on the north side of buildings in the shade are not always inviting. Additionally, the north side of NE 10th Street would not be a good location given how busy the street is and how difficult it would be for pedestrians to reach it. He suggested any open space in the district should be placed between NE 8th Street and NE 10th Street on either side of 106th Avenue NE.

Ms. Stout asked if the vision for the Northwest Village district is for high-density development with apartments above retail uses? Ms. Wilma said the district is envisioned as primarily a residential district with ground floor retail. The district has had the least amount of redevelopment to date so a variety of open spaces are still needed.

Attention was drawn next to the strategy of exploring the potential for a significant open space spanning I-405 and connecting the Downtown and Wilburton. Ms. Wilma shared with the Committee members graphics showing similar approaches used in cities around the nation. She noted that such a lid would present a significant placemaking opportunity in the middle of the City.

Co-chair Laing asked what Sound Transit has had to say about the idea and the possibility of tying it into the light rail project. Mr. Stroh said he was not aware of any discussions with Sound Transit about the idea of putting a lid over the freeway. The need to work through the Memorandum of Understanding and address the issues around other projects that will need to be synced with Sound Transit will be a big focus of the next City Capital Investment Plan (CIP). The lid would represent a huge add to the list. Co-

chair Laing said he is very excited about the idea. He said he would like to see a dedicated pedestrian/bicycle pathway with landscaping created as Sound Transit put back all the sidewalks between I-90 and Redmond it will be tearing out as part of the light rail project. Such a project would connect every single light rail station in Bellevue, would be at an easy grade, and could ultimately connect the I-90 trail to the Burke Gillman trail. Everybody agrees it would be a good idea, but the notion has not even been raised with Sound Transit. To avoid doing so, will be to miss a golden opportunity. It will be far easier to include a lid over the freeway as part of the light rail project than it would be to come in years later and add it. Mr. Stroh said the thinking to date has been that a pedestrian bridge or open space lid would be projects separate from the light rail project, but he agreed to consider making it all one project and provide a report at a future Committee meeting.

Mr. Bannon said for some time the focus has been on providing better access to and from the light rail stations as they get constructed. He said he liked the idea of thinking somewhat broader about what the Downtown station area is. It is very feasible to think the area could extend a half mile across the freeway.

Ms. Wilma said the strategy regarding through-block connections includes a change in nomenclature from mid-block connections in order to differentiate them from the crosswalks that occur at the mid-block point. The strategy proposes a deliberate network of through-block connections across Downtown. The Downtown Transportation Plan update established priorities for through-block crossings. The guidelines need to be strengthened to identify minimum dimensions, lighting expectations, and other elements. All proposed locations are conceptual only and will need to align with future development patterns. The edges can be activated with retail or residential, and attention should be paid to making sure there is good solar access. Particular attention should be paid to connecting the open spaces within the superblocks.

Mr. Ferris noted that some of the existing through-block connections are so narrow and poorly signed they do not feel open to the public. The design guidelines should be written to call out the need to make the connections open and inviting and appear to be public spaces. Where residential uses are involved, the design of the connections should accommodate privacy. They should also be multifunctional, serving pedestrians at certain times of the day and maybe restaurant patrons in the evening hours.

Ms. Wilma said more details will be fleshed out in the discussion on the design guidelines.

Ms. Maxwell said the new City Hall plaza will be a good place to have a welcoming statement of heritage.

Mr. Ferris commented that the programmed CIP covers a seven-year period but is underfunded. The notion that new amenities will come about as a result of leveraging development capacity can only really be expected to bring about so many amenities. The Committee has no voice in what the property taxes should be or what bonds should be

issued to pay for projects, so the Committee needs to be realistic in making a recommendation to the Council that incentives and development lifts will not yield everything the City wants. The City will need to investigate other funding sources to realize the vision.

6. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Paul Braulier, 11021 NE 14th Street, spoke representing the Northtowne Community Club. He pointed out that while NE 12th Street is the northernmost boundary of the Downtown, McCormick Park lies just across the street and serves as the transition between the Downtown and the Northtowne community. The Committee was encouraged to think of the park as one of the Downtown's open spaces. A lot of people use the park to gain some exercise and the park could benefit from having a few more amenities. There's a bike path coming across the freeway on NE 12th Street, but that facility dies at the intersection with 112th Avenue NE. A property that should have been acquired some time ago should be purchased to allow for an opening up of the corner and promoting the use of McCormick Park by bicycles. The little garden could also be increased in size, and a sign giving the name of the community could be installed back a little way from the corner. There is also a pinch point at 106th Avenue NE; the sidewalk there is barely wide enough for one person. The acquisition of a property there is needed to open up the pinch point and permit a full multiuse path. He said the Northtowne Community Club has been closely following the work of the Committee and is appreciative of the work that has been done.

7. ADJOURN

Co-chair Simas adjourned the meeting at 9:23 p.m.